

Hawaiian Gazette

EST. 1864 IN KAUAI.

TEN-PAGE EDITION.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1889.

SHALL THE PROPERTY QUALIFICATION BE ABOLISHED?

The property qualification for election of Nobles, to which we alluded yesterday, is one of the chief safeguards of liberty and good government in this country. Perhaps no one of the numerous political changes which date from the 30th of July, 1887, is more important than this (unless we except the abolition of the veto power). The reason is that it is a guarantee, so far as such a matter can be guaranteed at all, that one-half of the Legislative body shall be composed of progressive, reliable and honest members. It insures this result because it gives the House of Nobles the most intelligent constituency in the country. Nothing could be more mistaken than to suppose that the qualification for election for Nobles is a mere property qualification. It is pre-eminently an intelligence qualification, and a very much surer and safer one than the ordinary low educational test. It gives, of course, political weight to the small owner and makes it certain he will have a voice in the conduct of affairs. This alone would be justification enough for the arrangement were it not justified without. But the chief advantage of the system lies in the fact that it recognizes the superior intelligence of skilled laborers in comparison with the unskilled, and gives, in consequence, to the skilled labor of the country a political importance which it ought to have, and which it could never get in any other way. The Mechanics' Union would not begin to be the political force it now is or can be if all the voters for Representatives throughout the country were also voters for Nobles. No doubt there are many members of the Union who are not in fact voters for Nobles. But surely if they have intelligence and grit they may all hope to become such, and in any case their number is trifling compared with the great mass of ignorant and politically uninstructed voters throughout the land. It takes brains to make a good mechanic, and brains are entitled to power at the polls. That is what the present Constitution recognizes. Is there anything wrong about that?

The planters, a good many persons may suppose, are the ones chiefly benefited by the property qualification. A moment's reflection will show that no opinion could well be more unfounded. Good government, of course, benefits all classes in the community, so far as they are well disposed, and if the planters belong to that category doubtless they come in for a share in the benefit. But they are not otherwise interested in the matter and are in no wise directly benefited by it. Their power at the polls does not count for any more. Their numbers are so small that as voters they are of little consequence and are completely swamped at the ballot box by any other class, to say nothing of all combined. As voters alone therefore it must be a matter of practical indifference to them what conditions are attached to the franchise. But if this is true of them considered directly as voters, it is equally true that their general political influence is not one whit increased by a property qualification. If their interests run counter to the general interests of the country, intelligent electors with property and interests of their own to defend and preserve are the one's most likely to discover the fact and take proper measures. If planters or any one else wish to exercise an undue and political influence, their best friend is an ignorant electorate with nothing to lose, their worst enemy the intelligent voter with a home and family of his own.

If there is any force in the foregoing, it is very clear that not the planters, not the big commission houses, but the mechanics, the skilled laborer, the small proprietor, the subordinate employees in mercantile houses, are the persons chiefly interested in the small property and income qualification which our present Constitution attaches to the right to vote for Nobles. Their political importance is vastly increased, we might almost say created thereby. It is suicide for them to attack the arrangement.

to believe that they are going to allow themselves to be captured and led off by the nose by the Elele and its crowd. The result would be only to produce discord and confusion in their own ranks, to weaken their power for the present, and eventually to destroy it. The Mechanics want good government and the Elele does not. The Mechanics want to believe a government by society at large in the interests of society. The Elele wants one man power, and that power the King's. We do not believe the Mechanics want anything of the sort.

The truth is we are very lucky to have a property qualification in our constitution at all, and it would be well to think twice before we try to get rid of it. We believe that the Mechanics of Honolulu will not decide eventually to vote away their own political importance by the forming of a partnership with the Elele. If they do they are likely to have plenty of time to chew the bitter end of reflection when they see their money voted to restore the Hawaiian navy to its former glory, and to rehabilitate the King in autocratic power, while public improvements are forgotten, and the streets of Honolulu relapse into their ancient darkness and ruts.

VIEWS OF THE PORTUGUESE PRESS.

Both of the Portuguese papers of last week contain well written articles, criticising the platform of the Mechanics' Union, and in particular exposing the dangerous character of the two planks borrowed from the Elele, and the utter hollowness of the anti-Chinese plank. These articles clearly show that the Wilcox party with which an attempt is being made to combine the Mechanics' Union, cannot be relied upon for any thorough-going anti-Asiatic legislation. It is indeed strange that Mr. Ho Fon was not added to the committee of the latter organization as well as Col. Hoapili Baker.

The writer in the Lusos says with reason that the success of the Elele's scheme would result in a state of affairs even worse than that which existed in "Gynbergdrunkenstein." He might have added that it is intended to lead to it. Ex-Governor Moses in South Carolina and Boss Buckley nearer home have shown how the machine can be worked. The Elele's sole conception of Government seems to be that of a sort of public boarding house, or of a machine for the distribution of spoils. Intelligent Hawaiians distrust its canting professions of disinterested aloha for the poor oppressed kanaka, and the stomach of even Sydney Smith's New Zealander would revolt against a six months' bill of fare of nothing but "cold missionary," unrelieved by a particle of wit or common sense. It was the same leaden pen that helped to sink the late Saturday Press.

THE VOTING PRIVILEGE.

The property qualification for voters for Nobles, established by the Constitution, is a provision for stability and conservatism in government. Although the proportion of native Hawaiian and Portuguese voters for Representatives, who may also vote for Nobles, under the restrictive conditions of this requirement, is considerably smaller than that of voters for Representatives, of other nationalities, the measure cannot be advantageously discussed as a race question in any sense whatever. The political experience of this country, and especially that of the last few years before the revolution of 1887, would not have justified the makers of the present constitution in throwing open the election of the Nobles to all voters without qualification. Such an arrangement would have speedily swept back the administration of government to the corrupt standards of the Gibson ministry.

It was necessary, if the appointment of Nobles by the King was to be given up, to provide for their appointment in some manner which would make them the exponent of the more conservative sentiment of the community, not for the sake of property holders, but for the benefit of all. Although a property qualification does not include all of the intelligent voters nor exclude all of the thoughtless and irresponsible ones, by any means, yet practically it reaches the object aimed at, and perhaps it reaches it better than any other method that has been suggested. A man may have the property qualifications and still be weak and ignorant and easily led into wrong views; but as a rule, the man

will be enterprising and more studious of public questions than the man who lives from hand to mouth.

It cannot be reasonably argued that such a restriction is unjust or that it favors any political party. Native Hawaiians do not make a political party, neither do the Portuguese, nor the voters for Nobles, these various classes will always divide more or less at elections upon the existing political questions. If the property qualification interferes with race prejudice or is an obstacle to the accomplishment of political aims based upon race distinctions, then it has an additional value of great importance, for there are few greater political mistakes, from all standpoints, than the attempt to influence or control a government in the interests of a race which forms a part of the body politic. National advancement can only be promoted upon the basis of the interests of the nation as a unit; any divergence from this principle is full of danger to public and individual interests.

It is generally recognized that the voting privilege is not a natural right which belongs to all; it is rather a public duty which men should be called upon to perform according to their capacity to perform this service intelligently and with benefit to themselves and their fellow citizens. There is no convenient or practical method known of gauging this personal capacity by individual examination: a committee of wise men might possibly conduct such examinations, but as it is not easy to draw the line between capacity and incapacity in relation to the act of voting, such a committee, themselves belonging to some political party, would never hold the confidence of the public in their conclusions.

It remains to make the selection of voters through general rules, which approximately accomplish the desired result; such is our requirement that voters for Representatives shall know how to read and write and the property qualification for voters for Nobles. There is no more injustice in these requirements than there is in the qualifications of age or sex. Many youths under twenty, and many women are, in character and intelligence, far more qualified to vote than many men who by knowing how to read and write may vote for Representatives or who having an income of \$600, or an estate worth \$3,000, may vote for Nobles; but these regulations cannot provide for exceptional cases, and the consideration is, not whether Johnny and Mrs. B. and Keawe and Manuel Silva are injured by not having the voting privilege, but whether the State is sufficiently injured to make it desirable to remove or modify the qualifications of age, sex, education and property.

THE CONSTITUTION.

It has grown to be so fashionable to abuse the present constitution that no one would be surprised if the next fad should come in the shape of general eulogies on the old. We have not ourselves forgotten the difference between the two installments yet, if a good many others seem to have done so. Perhaps it would not be out of place to remind the public of one or two of those differences. The new constitution did six things, all of them well worth doing:

1. It abolished an irresponsible veto, partly, and had the excellent intention of doing so altogether.
2. It took the appointment of Nobles away from the Crown and gave it to the People.
3. It placed the seal of executive responsibility in the cabinet, and made the cabinet responsible to the Legislature.
4. It deprived the ministers of power to vote on a motion of want of confidence, and by that one provision made government by the minority impossible, as by its other provisions it made government by one, impossible. The self confidence which, on a memorable occasion, kept the Gibson ministry in, will never save a ministry in this country again.
5. It shut all office holders out of the Legislature and made corrupt control of that branch of the Government by crown or ministry impossible.
6. It extended the franchise.

These are a few of the things which the new Constitution has done. They tell us clearly enough what was, before the change. The King monopolized all the powers of the Executive and could laugh at talk about "responsibility." The cabinet were the tools of the Crown.

the Legislature—body, soul and spirit. In short, the King was the government. Now, in the face of all these facts (and can anyone in the Kingdom deny that they are facts?) is it not silly, is it not infinitely absurd to make the Constitution a general butt, and complain of the things which it has left undone, or abuse it for some minor errors and mistakes of detail? It must not be forgotten that its framers could not command the ceremonious leisure in the atmosphere of which the American constitution was devised. Men here had to act in hot haste! Expediency made delay impossible. Instead of expecting a wiser and more perfect instrument than we have, the wonder is that it is as well considered, self consistent, progressive and conservative as it is. Allowing every deduction which afterthought (always so much wiser than forethought) can suggest, it remains a document which reflects honest credit on the men who drew and the Convention which adopted it. It has not escaped the fate of all other constitutions, and has already been made the subject of judicial interpretation, or, as some think, misinterpretation. But this has been a necessary incident to the existence of constitutions since the foundation of governments; and it is fortunate that our own has stood the test so well.

On the whole, our Constitution, though by no means perfect, is so good that tinkering with it is more likely to make it worse than better, and, apart from the amendment, which will probably be necessary to enable the Legislature to deal efficiently with the Chinese question, we will show most wisdom by letting well enough alone. Let us rather enjoy the good we have than fly to ills we know not of.

EDITORIAL RESPONSIBILITIES.

The responsibilities of an editor the world over are great in proportion to his location and the character of his paper. If he goes in for politics his party looks to him to do his duty. If he goes in for social matters he is expected to perform his part properly as a recorder and censor of the movements of the social world. If he makes a specialty of news he must print all the news or look out for squalls. In every editorial walk there rests upon the director of a journal the obligation of making his journal conform to the ideas, tastes and fancies of the readers who support it. If he does not, bankruptcy and general disaster are certain to supervene.

This is the rule as it applies to civilized nations. In China, however, they carry things still farther. The oldest newspaper in the world is published in the capital city of the porcelain empire. It is called the Pekin Gazette, and it is generally conceded to be a pretty good paper for China. It prints news and gossip, and editorials on current events, and is no doubt easy reading for a people brought up with tea box labels for A B C books. The Pekin Gazette is a thousand years old, and it has recently published the statement that since it began 1,900 of its editors have been beheaded. An average of two editors a year ought to entitle the Pekin Gazette to the proprietorship of the journalistic cake. Even the Arizona Kicker or the Mudville Muckrake do not do as well in that favored land of bowie-knives and gratuitous revolvers!

Miscellaneous.

The postal card was twenty years old on the 1st of this month.

Yale was the first college to take up boating in earnest. This was in 1843, and ten years afterward the first Yale-Harvard race was rowed.

The first railway sleeping-car of which there is any authentic information was used on the Cumberland Valley Railroad between Harrisburg and Chambersburg in 1836.

There has been a marked decadence in the use of the French language at Montreal during the last ten years. Formerly it was the prevalent tongue, but now the English predominates.

In Madagascar you can keep house, live well and three servants for about 70 cents a week. A hired girl would be paralyzed with astonishment if paid over 6 cents per week, and the washerwoman thinks she has got a soft snap at 3 cents a day.

Sixty war vessels were built by the powers of the world last year. No less than 100 were building when the year closed, and a still larger number are under construction now, with Uncle Sam beginning to join in the chorus and taking a leading part.

Thos. A. Edison asserts that there is no insulation which will make an electric wire safe, either above or below ground. He says that high-tension underground wires will burn out the tubes and may force dangerous currents into houses and man-holes.

The result of recent experiments in the Mediterranean Sea showing how far daylight will penetrate the water were found with gelatinous plates. The greatest depth was 1,518 feet, or 327 feet short of

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